

Green Ribbon Schools Webinar Q&A

Q1: My school has received "green" awards in the past. Are we still eligible?

A: Having earned "green" or sustainability awards in the past does not disqualify a school from applying for a U.S. Department of Education (USED) Green Ribbon Schools recognition award. The Green Ribbon School award is not only focused on "going green" but in the three pillars of reduced environmental impact and costs, improving the health and wellness of students and staff, and effective environmental and sustainability education.

Q2: How many MA schools do you expect will apply?

A: At the time of the webinar, we didn't know the answer to this. At present, we have a better idea based on the letters of intent submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). The letters of intent were intended to give the state agencies and non-governmental agency partners an idea of the number of schools and districts likely to apply and to plan to have appropriate resources available to review and score the applications. As of the end of October, ESE has received letters of intent from 15 schools and/or school districts that intend to apply. Schools and districts that have not submitted a letter of intent are still eligible to apply by the December 14, 2012 deadline to ESE.

Q3: Aside from state and/or national recognition, will this award make winners eligible for particular grants?

A: No, the Green Ribbon School Program is an award not a grant. We do anticipate that, similar to the USED Blue Ribbon Schools recognition program, the national prestige associated with Green Ribbon Schools will put awardees in good stead for other awards and recognitions.

There are benefits to all schools moving toward the three pillars. National studies and existing green schools programs have linked utility savings to schools' cost savings; school environmental health to student and staff productivity; student wellness to higher achievement; and environmental education to increased student engagement, improved student performance, enhanced critical thinking and reduced behavioral problems. The initiative is intended to set a high bar for schools; to incent those schools that are already on the road to achieving high standards; and to propel others to move toward providing a healthy, sustainable education and school. The recognition award can have a broad impact on students, teachers and instruction.

Q4: What is the difference in a district application? Do all schools have to be at the same level of "green-ness" to apply as a district?

A: This is the first year USED has opened the program to school districts. The Massachusetts Green Ribbon Schools District Application will be posted on ESE's web (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/sbuilding/GreenRibbon/>) site. Not all schools in a district need to achieve the same level of "greenness," but we will be looking for aspects of all three pillars to be represented by district schools. It should be noted that, while the district application will require less specificity in terms of individual school metrics on energy use, water use, etc., districts are encouraged to provide additional documentation of this, if obtainable. ESE is only permitted to nominate one Massachusetts district to USED, and USED expects to award the recognition to only a handful of school districts nationwide, not one for each state.

Q5: Are there requirements to report actual results in terms of energy/water/trash savings or is it enough to show actions to try to reduce impacts?

A: The USED application for schools does ask for specifics such as - the amount of energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, total water consumption, and other quantitative data. When possible, schools should point to actual data that shows these reductions. We are also interested, however, in hearing about meaningful efforts underway for which a school may not yet have metrics.

Q6: With only 4 schools that can be submitted for national recognition, is Massachusetts planning anything to recognize the Mass schools that apply but aren't chosen to go forward to national?

A: USED permits as many as four nominations. If a state nominates more than one public school, at least one must be a school with at least 40 percent of their students from a disadvantaged background. If state nominates a fourth school, it must be a private school. There is a possibility of a statewide recognition ceremony for schools that have made progress toward the three pillars but were not necessarily nominated to USED. There will be more information on this after applications are reviewed.

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Q7: I realize that the answers may be found within the links you have already shown us, but the real question is the criteria by which a school will be evaluated. Are there separate categories for energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction and CO2 reduction? Many projects take time before results are seen. Is it about performance and improvement over measured baseline?

A: Please see Question 5 above. USED also has resources that include a fact sheet, criteria and frameworks for evaluation - <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/applicant.html>

Q8: Do you have an example of other schools who have won this award and have gone on to bigger and greener things?

A: A link to the USED 2012 honorees nationwide is here: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/index.html>. We are not aware of whether any of them have received additional recognition since their Green Ribbon Schools awards, but we do understand from USED that the award has created significant “buzz” locally and regionally for the 2012 honorees. Schools may also be sought out as mentors to others schools within and outside their school districts, and/or may find raising funds and recruiting students is a little easier.

Q9: Can a school who is readying to implement a year long, school-wide energy audit be considered for nomination without showing as yet to be collected energy improvements?

A: The USED application does require specifics regarding energy usage, recycling volume, greenhouse gas emissions, and other quantitative data. While we applaud schools for working toward these goals it might be best to apply next year when at least some data are available. However, if your school does apply this year and does not receive a Green Ribbon School award they may apply again the following year. Please see Question 5 for additional clarification.

Q10: Who is eligible to apply for this? Could a recycling coordinator do this or would it have to come from a school administrator?

A: With school or district approval a recycling coordinator could certainly work on behalf of a school to prepare an application and, in fact, we recommend that schools assemble teams to complete their applications. These teams could include municipal recycling and energy coordinators, teachers, a school nurse, or school facilities director, among others. The actual application submittal to ESE, however, must come from a school or district.

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[Click here](#) for more information.

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